



Trees, animals, birds, plants, forests, mountains, lakes and rivers — everything that exists in Nature are in desperate need of our kindness, of the compassionate care and protection of human beings. If we protect them, they in turn will protect us. - Amma

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GreenFriends is a global grassroots environmental movement which promotes environmental awareness and local participation in conservation efforts throughout the world.

GreenFriends is one of the projects of [Embracing the World](#), a not-for-profit international collective of charities founded by internationally known spiritual and humanitarian leader, Mata Amritanandamayi (Amma)

To join the Pacific Northwest GreenFriends Litter Project, write Karuna at karunap108@comcast.net

NEWS

There will be no PNW GreenFriends Newsletter in May, June or July 2021. During that hiatus, Karuna is going to focus on her health.

Gardening

Garden Log 2: Seedlings! by Josh (Indiana)



This month has been all about seedlings. There hasn't been any outside work to do, though most of this month has been quite warm where I live in Indiana. It went from being below 30 almost every day to being about 50 everyday in the space of a few days.

As far as I can tell, there hasn't been a frost since the first Saturday in March. The usual last frost date is around April 27 for where I live, though last year I believe we had some frost in May. It is hard to say with Indiana in general, as wild fluctuations can be normal for Indiana.

Due to this, I decided that I would plan on having tomatoes and similar plants ready to put in the ground about June 1, just to have a greater chance of no frost, but still with plenty of time to grow and produce, at least 3 months, and maybe even 4 here in central Indiana.

I might have started my eggplant a little too early though -- see the above picture, which shows them about three and a half weeks after seeding; they are already growing their second pair of true leaves. They seem to be doing quite well, and if outside conditions permitted I would plant them in the ground, but that won't be possible until May at least. The seed package says start indoors 10 to 12 weeks before planting outside, so I should have waited until about the beginning of April perhaps, though I'm honestly not sure why it says to start them that far in advance -- the plants above seem like they could go outside after 3 and half weeks! In a few days I will be transferring these to quart-size yogurt containers with a mix of garden soil and seed starting mix -- I hope that will be good enough for them for the next two and half months!

Since this is my first year starting seeds indoors I'm certainly learning some things. For example, one of my six-celled trays that I planted broccoli in only sprouted broccoli in one of the cells, so two weeks later I planted more seeds in the other cells, which led to this:

Gardening



A large broccoli and a bunch of little ones! The problem is that the large broccoli is ready to be acclimated to outside and planted, and the little ones certainly aren't, so I repotted the big one (see below) in order to acclimate it and plant it soon -- not ideal perhaps but I think it will work.



I noticed a curious phenomenon with the other cells of broccoli in that particular tray: some of them did sprout, but then it looked like they were unable to shed their seed coat:

Gardening



The broccoli in the lower left of the above photo was sprouted for a few days, but the seed shell was still attached to the seed leaves. In this photo, you can see how it is dropping over, with the seed leaves still encased in the seed shell -- it didn't survive. This happened more than once and I have no idea why!

Magical Nature

One of my favorite things I've learned about is bottom-watering. Usually we think of pouring water on the top of the soil in order to mimic rain, but a more efficient method is bottom-watering, where you put the seedling trays in a pool of water. By the magic of nature, the soil defies gravity and sucks the water up from the bottom to the top of the soil.

You can see the process in the three photos below. The mix I started with was quite dry, and it has a light color in the first photo. The third photo, after about an hour, the mix is quite dark and completely moist. The middle photo shows about a half-an-hour into the process, with some patches of moist darkness, and some patches of light dryness.



Gardening

Looking Ahead

The coming month will definitely be busier. Soon I will plant my broccoli in the ground. I will seed some carrots in the ground, and perhaps some other things too. In early April I will start my tomato seeds, hoping they will be ready to plant in ground at the beginning of June, and there is the rather large project of digging a new garden patch for the tomatoes -- my goal is to dig a keyhole-shaped garden using the double-digging method as a home for tomatoes, eggplants, basil, sage, and sunflowers!

Tips? Questions? Suggestions?

Have a great tip you think might help me (or someone else) out? A golden nugget of information that might make my day? A burning question that you want answered?

Let me know and we can explore together!

greenfriends-gardening@gmail.com



PNW Gardening

BZZZZZ! by Lin (Bellevue)



Three Rosemary Seeds on a Bed of Vermiculite

It's April and the bees are coming! They're not coming on the wing. The colonists, like pioneers of old when they crossed the Atlantic, are being shipped from California to Seattle by UPS of all things—the honeybee version of steerage.

Five million bees in five hundred boxes. Like last year, it'll be a harrowing trip because of transportation restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic. Even in ordinary times, the trip is hard on them.

Normally, to reduce their stress, they're shipped at night, when they're least active, and in a specially-cooled truck to make them even more inactive—one driven by a Washington beekeeper sensitive to the needs of bees. This year, like last year, it'll be just a regular UPS driver in a regular truck—a driver who knows nothing of bees and couldn't care less.

What? Honeybees shipped from California? Why aren't they raised locally? Because it's too cold and damp here in the Pacific Northwest. It's the same for Canada—except that, because of agricultural restrictions at the border, they have to get their bees from New Zealand (where the seasons are the opposite of ours).

In fact, our American agriculture and its bees are basically European. Immigrants brought along their fruit trees and seeds for crops, and the bees that pollinate them. As settlers moved West, so did the bees. It's their descendants that provide our honey. But these days colonies die and have to be replaced. Just like humans, today's bees have weakened immune systems thanks to pesticides and other environmental pollutants.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/honey-bee-water-buckfast-insect-292132/>



<https://pixabay.com/photos/dahlia-blossom-bloom-flower-bee-3856176/>

PNW Gardening

The biggest killer is bee colony collapse disorder. It kills worker bees that have left the hive to search for food. Their forays are carefully timed because each type of flower has a peak hour during the day when their nectar is most attractive to pollinators. That attractiveness comes from a special way the flower draws up and concentrates moisture (which mixes with insecticides sprayed on the plant).

It's been found that bees recognize they've been poisoned and go off to die rather than take that nectar back to the hive where it will harm the rest of the colony. Honey can't be produced when worker bees stop bringing their deliveries—which means there's insufficient food to feed the hive and the newly hatched larvae to replace bees that have died, either naturally or by glyphosate.

Today, yearly shipments of honeybees are needed to compensate for the colony collapse problem of the 1980s when two kinds of parasitic mites entered the U.S. (though scientists believe that insecticides had already weakened the bees' immune systems, and are continuing to prevent them from regaining their formerly robust constitutions).

Most hive losses occur during the winter, with some bounce-back during the warmer months. Before colony collapse, the average winter loss rate was 15 percent. In winter 2008, beekeepers lost 28.1 percent of their bees. In 2010, they lost a record of 43.7 percent, and 2019 saw a 35.6 percent loss. Between 1947 and 2008, the number of honeybees in the United States declined by a whopping 61 percent. Pollination is responsible for 5 to 8 percent of global agricultural production, meaning declines pose potential risk to the world's food supply. <https://www.thebalance.com/bee-colony-collapse-disorder-facts-and-economic-impact-3305815>

And it's not just bees being adversely impacted. It's all the pollinators, including butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds. They're the canaries in the coal mine, the super-sensitive creatures that die first as a warning to those around them. So that's why, every spring, bees have to be shipped to Seattle and elsewhere around the country.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/nature-bee-pollen-flowersclose-up-5070665/>

Honey is like liquid gold—15 million flowers in a jar. In a whole lifetime a bee will make only a thimbleful of honey. The forager bees (called worker bees) store the nectar in a crop in their thorax and bring it back to the hive where it's dehydrated and made into honey. They fly up to 15 miles from their hive for each of about 10-15 trips. So they only last a month in the summer because they die from working their wings so hard. After natural attrition, plus losses from glyphosate, imagine how fast the hive bees have to work raising hatchlings to keep up the supply of new worker bees!

Covid-19 drastically changed honeybee shipping last year. A beekeeping friend ended up frantically reorganizing last year's transport, payment, and pickup system to work within the constraints of social distancing so that she and many of Washington's beekeepers would be able to receive their shipments.

PNW Gardening

It's always a last-minute scramble because timing depends on the weather, both in California and in Washington. It can't be too hot or too cold on either end, and the bees have to be kept calm, cool, and healthy. Last year the routine was upended not only by transportation and distribution problems, but also by weather. Who knows what will happen this year. This is a grave concern because the apple and cherry orchards, and blueberry fields, might have peak bloom before bees will be available for pollination.



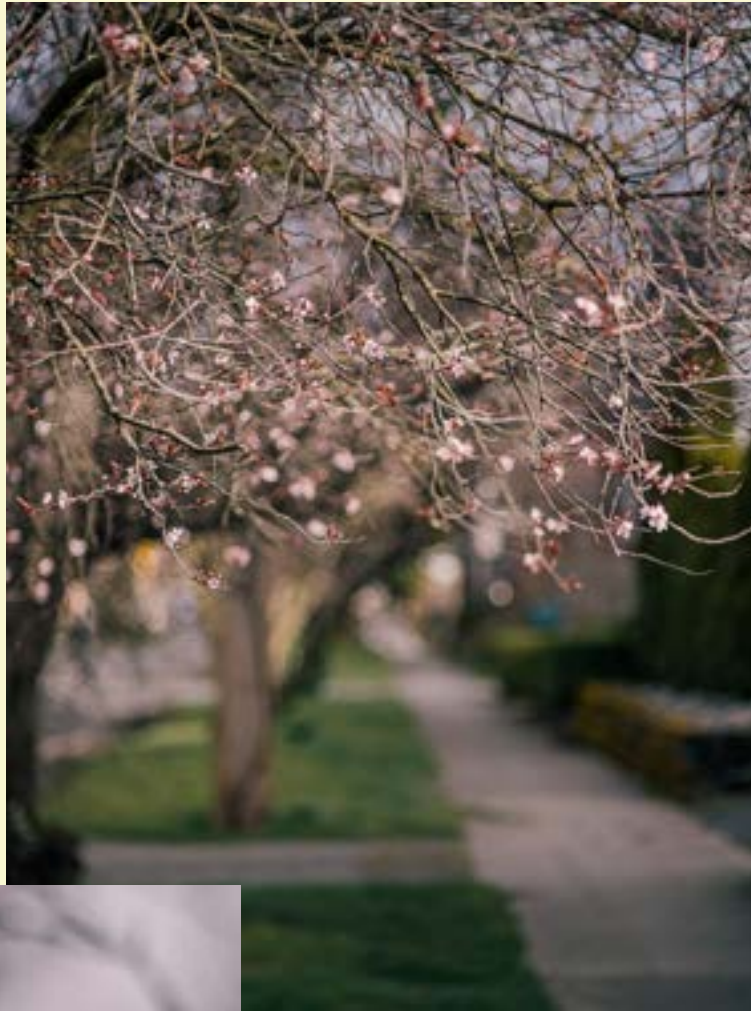
pixabay.com/photos/bees-pollination-insect-macro-18192/

It's with good cause that we worry about the availability of bees to pollinate crops. For the last several years, during the critical five days of peak bloom, China has had to pollinate fruit trees by hand with little clusters of chicken feathers on the end of a long stick because the country's polluted air and forty years of heavy pesticide use and lack of natural habitat have wiped out their pollinating insects. Imagine pollinating each blossom by hand with chicken feathers! Entire orchards.

Pray for our bees! They need all the help they can get. And we need their pollinating services. Will we get our shipment, and will the bees arrive intact?

Nature

A Morning Walk around My Seattle Neighborhood by Kelvin



Nature



Nature



Nature



Nature

More Nature Photos

From Amar in Portland:



Nature



Nature

From Kristin in Seattle:



Nature



Nature Inspired Art

Gardens of Gratitude: Creating Nature Inspired Art by Sarah/Sudha (Eugene)

Nature is benefited by the concentration of spiritual people. Prayer and spiritual concentration are powerful means for purifying the atmosphere. At the same time, we can also draw spiritual power, hope and trust from being in nature - through prayer, chanting, and meditation, in words, or in silence. ~Amma



Sitting gently on Mother Earth, I would often find myself overwhelmed by her majestic beauty. I have always been drawn to spend time in the natural world. During this last year, I have spent so many hours walking, running, hammocking and sitting among the landscapes of the fertile Willamette Valley and my backyard. This time in nature is a way for me to connect to myself. During this last year, it has been especially important for calming my nervous system and rejuvenating my weary soul.

As an artist, I have studied many methods of how to capture the natural world and her powerful display of color, shape and sensory offerings. Mediums used include photography, drawing, painting and, more recently, poetry. These methods encourage me to look closely at the details of the natural world—and I experience this as a journey toward my true self.

Nature Inspired Art

Developing nature-inspired art is a process of trial and error. There have been times I have been simply too overwhelmed by so much exquisite beauty (spring blossoms, summer gardens, autumn leaves and winter silhouettes). This feeling of being overwhelmed is often simultaneously paired with sincere frustration because I could not capture nature's beauty with any art-making process.

After several decades of discouraging frustration, I decided to approach my art with a new perspective that I feel came to me through Amma's White Flower meditation and Her grace.

And with a recent addition of writing poetry that speaks to the natural world, my creative process feels more balanced and relaxed.

If you are interested in creating nature-inspired art, here are several tips that I hope will inspire you!

- Spend TIME in nature. Take a walk or sit in a natural area.
- OBSERVE. Look at the place you are in with a sense of wonder and innocence, perhaps noticing something new or unusual.
- Note what INSPIRES you. Write about or photograph what brings you joy and peace when observing. (Use color, shape, smell, texture, pattern, etc.)

Examples:

- Notice the tiny plants or moss that grow in the cracks of urban sidewalks.
- Look up and find a unique cloud shape or the pattern of tree branches against the sky.
- Encourage your eyes to follow a leaf tossed by the wind.
- Follow the light of the sun as it illuminates a house plant, a bowl of fruit or kitchen herbs growing in the window sill.

I love to look closely at the patterns and shapes of vegetables. Purple cabbage and kiwi slices are filled with creative inspiration!

Photographing silhouettes is one of my favorite ways to appreciate and capture nature, especially in the early morning just after sunrise.

If you are interested in drawing, consider these tips:

- Use your non-dominant hand.
- Only look at your subject, not the paper (this technique is called blind drawing)
- Trace something in a book or magazine that captures your attention. This is surprisingly satisfying and a great way to get to learn more about line, shape and form.
- Experiment with different mediums, such as ink, pencil, watercolor, collage (recycled magazines work great!), photography, etc.

Nature is an endless resource for inspiration, providing visual fuel as well as texture, sound, color, and vibration. We can use an artist practice to further develop a close and loving relationship with nature.

Nature Inspired Art

Mother Earth

midnight blue
seen from far above

millions of souls
pray for you

ancient mantras repeated—
sacred and mystical

infinite white flowers
showered upon you
with reverence

and LOVE...

Nature Inspired Art



Nature Inspired Art



Nature Inspired Art



Nature Inspired Art



Nature Inspired Art

Sakura Cake by Sonali (Sammamish)



Cherry blossoms (Sakura in Japanese) are a symbolic flower of the spring season. Rosy pink is the main color of the Sakura flower, which symbolizes love. To celebrate their beauty, I made a cascading cherry blossom cake. The flowers sat on top of a white cake, as white is a symbol of purity and peace.

Many parts of the world, such as Japan, celebrate cherry blossom festivals as a staple of their culture and attract many tourists. The trees only bloom for a few weeks. Recently, however, blooming periods are gradually becoming more unpredictable in various places across the world due to Climate Change, making it harder for visitors to plan their trip to cherry blossom festivals in advance. Long term trends of earlier bloom seasons are a key indicator to the effects of Climate Change on seasonal patterns and ecosystems.

To make the cherry blossom flowers on the cake, I colored and rolled out some light pink fondant and used a flower cookie cutter to get the basic shape. Then, I used a ball gum paste tool to thin out the petals. The next day, after the flowers had dried, I worked on the inner detailing of the flower. If you look closely, the inside of a cherry blossom flower is a shade darker, so I wanted to add this to make it look more realistic. I used some edible dark pink metallic paint and used a paintbrush to paint small dots starting from the center and dispersing as they made their way up the petal. While I set aside the flowers for the paint inside to dry, I made a sugar sheet to cover the sides of the cake. After it set, I painted the edges with some edible gold paint. The last step was to assemble everything. I stacked the cake tiers and wrapped the sugar sheet around both layers. I started adding the flowers at the top and stuck them on the side so they were cascading down, almost like a waterfall.

The short-lived beauty of the cherry blossoms reminds us that beauty of life passes very quickly so we have to use

Nature Inspired Art

our precious time on Earth in the right way!

Sources:

[Cherry Blossoms: A Sure Sign of Spring and Maybe Climate Change | The EPA Blog](#)

[Cherry Blossoms' Peak Bloom Is an Indicator of Climate Change - Eos](#)



PNW Litter Project

Litter Stats

The Litter project hours for March, April, May and June will be reported in the next issue after our hiatus. Litter times will continue to be collected during the hiatus. We have picked up litter for **12037.77** hours since the project began in July of 2011.



TerraCycle Stats

We have sent TerraCycle **363,224** cigarette butts since 2013. [TerraCycle is an organization that recycles items which are normally considered unrecyclable.]

Litter Story by Willy

IT'S ALWAYS AN ADVENTURE Every morning I get ready to walk my little dog, get some exercise, and pick up litter. This dog walking business, well, it has hidden gems within it. First off, I have met most of the folks in my neighborhood simply by being there when they are outside. That is such a plus. I have increased my friends because of it. Another hidden gem, is litter pick up. No, really! I find strange stuff, neat stuff, and valuable stuff. I never know what I'm going to find. Nuts and bolts, tools, clothes, and even money. Mostly it's trash, but some is recyclable, and some (like beer cans) is worth something. Those things I save for my unhoused friends. Lastly, I have made acquaintances with our local crows. Yes, they are in abundance here, and very vocal and opinionated. They seem to not like cats, and are somewhat suspicious of dogs. I think I passed the test though; they don't yell at me so much. All these things make for a great walk, even in the rain. If you don't believe me, ask Rosie. That's my dog!

Interesting Information from our Readers

From Lin in Bellevue:

Woodlanders – a crowd-funded series of short films about forest products and crafts. Beautiful. For instance, did you know shitake mushrooms are grown in Japan on cuttings from oak trees?

<http://www.woodlanders.com>

John D. Liu - After 15 years as a Television Producer and Cameraman for CBS News, RAI and ZDF John began to study ecology. Among other things, his organization produces environmental and ecological films.

<https://www.commonland.com/news/green-gold>

“Hope in a Changing Climate” (shows before and after footage of a vast land restoration project of severely degraded land in the watershed above the Yellow River in China).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=InYKENDfZng> (a must watch!)

“Forests Keep Drylands Working” is another of his films.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0GplFTy7Tk>

John Liu also founded volunteer eco-restoration camps around the world to restore degraded land.

<https://ecosystemrestorationcamps.org/join-a-camp>

Here is something similar that someone in Egypt did to reverse desertification and restore the land to productivity.

https://www.academia.edu/43899898/SEKEM_The_journey_and_the_future